Transformation and Reorganisation of Ritual Space in Singapore's Hindu Temples, With Special Reference to the Priesthood

Transformation and Reorganisation of Ritual Space in Singapore's Hindu Temples, With Special Reference to the Priesthood

Hiroshi YAMASHITA

This paper[1] discusses the ritual space of Hindu temples specific to the Indian diaspora, with special reference to the priesthood in Singapore, a typical, multi-ethnic nation where Chinese and Indians form the diaspora, or overseas immigrant society.

1. Ethnicities and Religions in Singapore

The Republic of Singapore is a modernised city-state that gained its independence from Malaysia in 1965. Located approximately on the equator（137 km to the north of the equator）and surrounded by the Johor Strait at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula to the north and the Riau Archipelago to the south, Singapore, with its irregular trapezoidal shape, has an overall area of 616.3 km^2. Immigration from India to the Malay Peninsula dates back more than a century. The Tamils, plantation labourers mainly from coastal areas of central Tamil Nadu, crossed the ocean and reached the Malay lands. Currently, Singapore's Indian residents work in the nation's various fields and sectors.

According to government publications, the gross population of Singapore in 2017 was 5,612,300, and the population and composition based on ethnicity, including both citizenship holders and permanent residents（PRs）, totals 2,900,007（74.3%）[2] ethnic Chinese, 520,923（13.3%）ethnic Malays, 354,952（9.1%）ethnic Indians and 126,808（3.2%）others[3]. If we look into the growth rate of the three major ethnic groups' populations, we find that the population of ethnic Indians has grown remarkably. Considering that the number of ethnic Indians in their 30s is 65,751, the biggest age group, we can assume that a large number of engineers and others specialists settled in the country as PRs[4]. If we look into the proportion of religious groups, Hindus represent no more than half of Indian residents, with the remainder including Muslims and Christians. If we compare the religious proportion of ethnic Chinese with that of the Indians, who are religiously divided into three different religions, we can see the religion-wise segmentation in this ethnic group as well. In the case of ethnic Chinese, the religions they mostly embrace are Buddhism, Taoism and Christianity[5]. Both ethnic Indians and ethnic Chinese are experiencing religious segmentation[6], and these matters will be revisited in the final chapter.

2. Categories of Hindu Temples in Singapore

Asked about the overall number of Hindu temples in this nation, local people usually answer that Singapore currently has 27 or 28, which actually represent Hindu temples with structures and does not necessarily indicate entire Hindu temples in this nation. It must be noted that these numbers differ significantly from the actual number of temples[7]. On a Hindu Endowments Board（HEB）webpage, a

statutory body that owns four major Hindu temples in Singapore and helps represent the Hindu community, 20 Hindu temples are listed with contact addresses and phone numbers[8].

However, in reality, many other temples can be found in Singapore, though they are very small and publicly unknown, except on special occasions. In English, they are called 'jungle temples', or temples in the moors[9]. They are not officially registered with the government; thus, no exact, total number of Hindu temples in Singapore is available[10].

One standard for classifying Hindu temples in Singapore entails whether a temple has an independent identity as a full-fledged Hindu temple or is a subordinate one attached to a temple complex of some other religion. In the latter case, such temples worship specific Hindu gods as their central deities and are appendages of larger Taoist temples for ethnic Chinese in the precinct. Such temples are very small in number, but still exist. The present author confirmed that inside the compound of a large Taoist temple called Loyang Tua Pek Kong（洛阳大伯公宫）in Changi area lies a small Hindu shrine, Sri Maha Ganapati Sanctum, in which Lord Ganapati, the elephant-headed god known otherwise as Ganesa or Vinayaka[11], is enshrined. In a nearby locality, a small Muneeswaran temple on the corner of a Taoist temple complex is set up in a similar manner.

Hindu temples in Singapore also can be categorised according to the descent of the person who acts as the priest, i.e., whether he is from a Brahman or non-Brahman background. According to priesthood criteria, Hindu temples in Singapore are categorised as follows:

（1）Temples without any assigned priests
（2）Temples with only non-Brahman（in many cases Pandaram）priests conducting daily rituals.
（3）Temples where both Brahman and non-Brahman priests collaboratively perform daily rituals.
（4）Temples where only Brahman priests perform rituals.

In category（1）, the 'temples in the moors' are included. It also applies to tiny temples where ritual worship is conducted only during special occasions without any Brahman priests, even if the temple is not located 'in the moors'.

As for category（2）, they probably existed in bygone years, though their presence cannot be confirmed in contemporary Singapore[12]. Singapore's Hindu temples once included those where only Pandarams held rituals, one of which was the Sri Thendayuthapani Temple（hereafter the Thendayuthapani Temple）, where rituals were conducted by a Pandaram priest（or priests）when the temple was still small and not organised before World War II. However, the situation drastically changed because of a growing demand for Brahmans for orthodox rituals[13]. As part of the history of Singapore, a record refers to a Vaisnava Brahman as the first professional priest who immigrated to the country before World War II[14].

As for category（3）, the author has confirmed the existence of several such temples[15]. The aforementioned Hindu temple with Vinayaka as its main deity, located in the Taoist temple Loyang Tua Pek Kong, is one of them. As for large-scale temples, several exist. The Sri Mariamman Temple（hereafter the Mariamman Temple）, located in Chinatown（locally called Kreta Air or 牛車水）, and the aforementioned Thendayuthapani Temple on Tank Road are two examples. In the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, the Brahman and non-Brahman（more specifically, Pandaram）priests neither live in the same temple nor share ritual

works. This priesthood hybridity among both groups is being practised only in Southeast Asian diasporic environments such as Singapore and Malaysia. More details will be discussed later.

Category（4）is the variety most commonly found among organised Hindu temples[16] in present-day Singapore. In these temples, regardless of former background, only Brahman priests perform rituals for all deities enshrined in such temples.

In mainland India, many temples exist in which deities are clearly classified into those for which Brahman priests perform rituals and those which non-Brahman priests are in cherge of. On the other hand, organised Hindu temples in Singapore are, in most cases, temple complexes that co-enshrine a wide range of deities. The deities served by Brahman priests and those served by non-Brahman conterparts sometimes coexist side by side in one and the same compound. In temples where only Brahman priests work, Brahmans inevitably take responsibility for performing rituals even for the deities that non-Brahman priests typically cover. The typical example for this is Sri Muneeswaran Temple（hereafter the Muneeswaran Temple）in Commonwealth, a residential district near the midtown area. Muneeswaran, a rural deity whom non-Brahman priests are primarily responsible for in Tamil Nadu, is enshrined here as the main deity for whom Brahman priests perform rituals, along with subordinate godlings[17]. Such cases are not uncommon in Singapore.

3. Caste Affiliation of Temple Priests and Ritual Spaces in South India

As stated above, Hindu temples here can fall into types（1）to（4）, depending primarily on the scale and distinction of the caste communities to which the priests belong. However, in mainland India, category（3）, characterised by the hybridity of priests, actually does not exist because in India the concept of ritual pollution attached to the stratification of castes is so deep-rooted that the maintenance of spiritual purity is a matter of ultimate importance, particularly for Brahmans.

A temple, according to a Brahman priest, is the place where purity should be maintained with utmost care; therefore, it is inconceivable that Brahman priests, who are the highest（and thereby the purest）in caste hierarchy, would live in the same temple and share the ritual space with non-Brahman priests of the lower, impure origin. In Tamil Nadu, to preserve purity, Brahman priests make it a rule to separate their ritual domains rigidly, as well as living spaces, from those belonging to different – and thus lower – communities. They only work in Hindu temples whose priestly organisation consists exclusively of Brahmans of the same sect. These temples, only when purity is strictly observed and order and balance are well-maintained, are places of worship visited by devotees who pray for prosperity and well-being, whether for an individual, household, lineage or community. Because the space inside these temples, as well as the deities being worshipped, must be kept untainted, strict attention must be paid to isolating them from the most impure entities including 'blood'. Therefore, animal sacrifices are never performed within their temple premises[18], but this is not the case with non-Brahman temples, in which the source of power or means of propitiation is, in many cases, 'bloodshed' of sacrificial animals or devotees themselves.

The categories of deities worshipped in rituals differ between Brahman and non-Brahman temples. The deities that non-Brahman priests serve originally had no connection with Agamic manuals written in Sanskrit, the authoritative language. They are, in most cases, enshrined in minor temples in villages, with which no Brahman priests are involved. The castes of non-Brahman priests are usually low, and constant

efforts to maintain purity, as observed in Brahman temples, do not exist in their temples. What functions in their temple premises is more of a faith to 'power', rather than a pure/impure dichotomy. There, people find sacred significance in the votive rites of believers who perform animal sacrifices and self-immolation. By doing so, they try to inspire gods to exercise their power to fulfil the vows of the devotees. However, under Brahmanical standards, such acts are considered highly tainted. The Brahmans who set a maximum value on purity never practice as priests in such temples, where Pandaram or other priesthood sects are at work.

Thus, it is unimaginable in Tamil Nadu that Brahman and non-Brahman priests could coexist or engage in the same ritual acts habitually on the same temple premises, particularly for the same deity, be it cooperatively or individually. It is a principle that both kinds of priests perform rituals in separate temples and, to this author's knowledge, there is no exception as of this paper's writing in Tamil Nadu.

However, this does not necessarily mean that Brahmans and non-Brahmans *never* inhabit, even temporarily, the same ritual space in Tamil Nadu. It actually can occur in at least three cases. First, in the case of a sacred place or pilgrimage centre that comprises a vast area, e.g., a holy mountain, it is not uncommon for Brahman priests to work in a temple at the summit, which is the holiest spot, while at the base of the mountain, a shrine may exist where non-Brahman priests perform rituals[19]. Though the vast area of a sanctuary, as a whole, allows for the coexistence of both priests, they do not interfere with each other and exist in harmony while maintaining independence[20].

Secondly, even in a temple of non-Brahman priesthood, cases exist in which Brahman priests are hired temporarily to perform ceremonial rituals for several days during temple-restoration rituals,[21] which must be conducted periodically in an Agamic form, in principle, every 12 years. In this case, even if the principal priest in the temple is a non-Brahman, he temporarily steps aside from the deities that he otherwise serves and is strictly prevented from attending rituals being performed by Brahman priests employed exclusively for this particular occasion. The Brahmans hold the absolute leadership and solemnly carry on their prescribed Agamic rituals in sequence and in an orderly manner. On the final day, the sanctified water filled with the mystic power of *mantras* is poured over the roof of the renovated temple structure for its restoration, as well as over the icons for their reinstallation to renew their sacred power. This solemn ceremony is called the *Mahakumbhabhiseka*, which is the culmination of a series of rituals. Until the temple-restoration rituals are duly completed without any disturbances and the hired Brahman priests finally leave the temple, the non-Brahman priests remain behind the scenes. Therefore, the temporary coexistence of Brahman and non-Brahman priests during an occasion such as temple-restoration rites is not an uncommon occurrence, but even then, substantial cooperation and sharing of work between both parties do not occur explicitly in each ritual scene[22].

In the third case, a particular group of non-Brahmans is responsible for the enchantment of the *Tevaram*, the celebrated collection of devotional hymns composed in Middle Tamil. This group, known as Otuvars or Tecikars, chant songs in the presence of Brahman priests for various occasions in Saivite temple rituals, including the aforementioned *Mahakumbhabhiseka* sequences. They are a non-priestly group, trained professionally to sing religious songs in ritual spaces. They do not perform rituals as such in cooperation with Brahman priests, and their role is distinguished rigidly right from the beginning.

In this way, in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, the fatherland of most Singaporean Hindus, Brahman and non-Brahman priests never practically and regularly cooperate or cohabit with each other in

a temple milieu[23]. Keeping in mind that their religious practices are based on those in Tamil Nadu, I shall proceed to the discussion below.

4. The Cooperation and Division of Labour Among Priests in a Singaporean Hindu Temple

One of the aforementioned case examples of what is impossible in mainland India, but possible among the diaspora, in the section 'Categories of Hindu Temples in Singapore', is the cohabitation of Brahman and non-Brahman priests which is practically achieved. In this section, I will explain this matter while referring to the actual conditions in the Mariamman Temple. To avoid confusion, the Thendayuthapani Temple, where coexistence between Brahman and non-Brahman priests is observed, will be cited only when comparisons are necessary[24].

The Mariamman Temple in downtown Singapore's Chinatown was built in 1827 and is known to be the oldest Hindu temple in this city-state. The government of Singapore designated this temple as a National Monument in 1973 for the first time in this country's history, along with many other religious-heritage buildings. This temple initially was constructed only to enshrine a powerful rural goddess called Mariamman. Soon after that, in 1828, other gods including Rama, became co-enshrined to introduce Vaisnava elements into this temple[25]. The exterior of the temple in 1930 is shown in an old photo in the lower part of the temple plan[26] at the end of this paper. At present, with its favourable location in central Chinatown, it has become a tourist attraction. Along with the Hindus of Indian origin and foreign visitors, local Chinese devotees also can be seen attending worship services.

This temple's biggest ritual event is an annual festival comprising a series of votive rites related to the Hindu Epic *Mahabharata*, performed for several weeks. *Timiti*, or 'the fire-walking,' highlights the event[27]. No historical accounts are available regarding the origin of this ritual performance in this temple. As mentioned above, according to historical materials, one record says that before World War II, a Vaisnava Brahman arrived in Singapore as a priest. Although some of the deities enshrined in this temple are Vaisnavite, Saiva elements basically are predominant, and presently, Brahman priests, invited on work permits from Tamil Nadu, are exclusively Saivite priests called Gurukkals or Sivacaryas[28]. According to my investigation, made in February 2009, 18 paid staffers work in this temple, including priests[29]. A management committee of eight people administers the temple, all volunteers of Singaporean descent, whereas the staffers, except for two clerks and a guide, all come from India on work permits. The structure, according to each matter of duty, is as follows:

–Temple administrative committee (eight members): one chairman, one vice chairman, one accountant, one secretary and four operation committeemen

–Staff members (18 members): six Brahman priests (one chief priest and five assistant priests), two non-Brahman priests (one chief priest and one assistant priest), four musicians (instrumentalists), three odd-jobbers, two clerks and one guide

The routine of daily rituals (*puja*) for gods varies among temples, though not significantly. For example, the Mariamman Temple holds a midday prayer (*uccikalapuja*), which starts exactly at noon; a principal evening prayer (*nityapuja*), which starts at 6 p.m.; and special rituals (*upayam*, from the Sanskrit

ubhayam）[30] with individuals, married couples or families as their patrons（*upayakkarar*）. This daily routine usually ends around 9 p.m. Below, a simple analysis of *nityapuja*, which starts at a fixed time every evening, is provided. Although the same exact sequence of *nityapuja* rituals is repeated nightly, this paper focusses on the one performed on 1 Feb 2009（6-7 p.m.）. The following discussion is based on the ritual's sequence that evening. As for the sequence, [B] represents rituals performed by Brahman priests, while [P] is for rituals conducted by non-Brahman（or Pandaram）priests. The circled numbers in the ritual sequence given below correspond to the numbers of the divine icons in the layout of the temple plan provided at the end of this paper.

Ritual sequence of *nityapuja* at Mariamman Temple

Preparation for a *nityapuja* series of rituals and priests' entrance into the inner shrine

↓

A sacred fire is brought into the sanctum sanctorum of Goddess Mariamman（②）

↓

［B］*puja* and *arati*[31] for Murukan（plus Valli and Teyvayanai: his two divine spouses）（⑯）

↓

［B］*puja* and *arati* for Draupadi（⑩）

↓

［B］*puja* and *arati* for Rama（③）

↓

［B］*puja* and *arati* for Anjaneyar（Hanuman）

↓

［P］*puja* and elaborate *arati* with a large votive lamp for Mariamman in the sanctum sanctorum of the goddess（②）

↓

［P］*puja* and *arati* at the *balipitha*（the pedestal for offering）

↓

［P］A series of *puja* and *arati* at the Pandava sanctum（⑩⑪）

（Draupadi as the chief deity of the sanctum → Virabhadra → Maturaiviran → Draupadi statue on a portable shrine → Arjuna → statues of five Pandavas → Krishna and Garuda）

↓

［P］A series of *puja* and *arati* in the Aiyanar sanctum（⑫⑬）（Saptamatrikas → Aiyanar → Aravan）

↓

［P］A series of *puja* and *arati* for the *kotimaram*（the tall flagstaff where a flag is raised during the ceremony）（⑭）

（*kotimaram* → a brick representing a god → Siva *linga*）

↓

［B］*puja* and *arati* for Durga（④）

↓

［P］*puja* and *arati* for Periyatci（⑥）

↓

［P］*puja* and *arati* for Kali（⑦）

↓

［P］*puja* and *arati* for Aravan（⑨）（in parallel）［B］*puja* for Vinayaka（⑧）

↓

［P］*puja* and *arati* for Muttalaraja（⑮）

↓

［P］*puja* and elaborate *arati* with a large votive lamp for Mariamman in the sanctum sanctorum of the goddess（②）

↓

［P, B］Distribution of *prasada*, *vibhuti*, *kunkuma*, etc.[32]

（The end of *nityapuja*）

In relation to this paper's principal subject matter, what we understand from the above sequence comprises the following two focal points:

（1）Two different types of priests（Brahmans and non-Brahmans）never work together for the same deity. In other words, the deities enshrined in this temple complex are basically grouped into two categories – according to which kind of priests are in charge of them.

（2）This temple has Goddess Mariamman as its central deity and enshrines the assistant or attendant gods and other Sanskritic/Agamic deities, making it into a temple complex. Also, it has a striking structure in which the rituals seem to be focussed on the final ceremony for the principal goddess, Mariamman, that the non-Brahman chief priest performs exclusively.

The phenomenon（1）may have resulted from the demarcation of two priestly groups and the places of worship based on the categories of gods. However, as shown in（2）, the main deity of this temple is unquestionably Goddess Mariamman, which is basically of non-Brahmanical origin and embodies non-Brahmanical concepts of divine power. Hence, the priests mainly in charge are non-Brahman Pandarams or, more precisely, the non-Brahman chief priest of this entire temple complex is the medium par-excellence. Solely for this reason, Brahman priests here, who belong to the supreme caste, are overshadowed and remain below their Pandaram counterparts in ritual status. It is not without connections that the Pandaram chief priest played the most prominent and spectacular role during the annual *timiti*, or grand fire-walking festival, which is this temple's foremost attraction. In this annual event, the chief priest places a big earthen pot filled with divinely empowered water on his head and takes the lead in walking over the burning coals, followed by the other priests, temple staffers and devotees in a long line. Thus, the non-Brahmanical entity symbolically represented in this breath-taking spectacle of fire-walking is, indeed, what lies as the basis of this temple.

5. Encroachment of Agamic/Sanskritic Ritual Elements and the Future Trend of Temple Hinduism in Singapore

Even in the temples where we can see how non-Brahmanical values still dominate despite coexisting with Brahman priests, Brahmans' penetration and interference in ritual spaces gradually become noticeable. For example, though only non-Brahman priests were allowed to enter the sanctum of Goddess Mariamman previously, Brahman priests no longer are prohibited from stepping into the sanctuary. Likewise, although only non-Brahman priests could touch the main icon（*mulavigraha*）of Goddess Mariamman installed in the innermost chamber, Brahman priests can do so now.

Along with this phenomenon, there is a kind of Sanskritisation process of non-Brahman priests also occurring simultaneously. Whereas in India, not many Pandaram priests chant verses in Sanskrit in ritual areas, their counterparts in Singapore acquire some essential Sanskrit *mantras* and use them during rituals. Even in a temple where a non-Brahmanical god is worshipped as the main deity and non-Brahman priests play the most prominent role, the Sanskritisation, or more properly, Agamisation process steadily is arriving from every direction.

This transformation of Hindu temples among the Singaporean Hindu diaspora can be generalised into the following processes:

（A）From 'a temple in the moors' to an organised temple
（B）From a temple without priests to a temple with priests
（C）From non-Brahman priesthood to Brahman priesthood
（D）From a primitive form of rituals to the Agamicised rituals using Sanskrit *mantras*

This fourfold transition typically is experienced at the Thendayuthapani Temple of Tank Road. According to L.N. Subbiah, a former trustee of this temple, it was once a small shrine attended by members of a particular caste group（in this case, Nakarattars or Nattukkottai-cettiyars）, in which no professional priest was in charge. Instead, the congregation performed the rituals until it gradually developed into a large-scale temple where non-Brahman priests from India were invited to hold rituals for their main deity, Thendayuthapani or God Murukan. Soon, it was registered as a Hindu temple with the Singapore government and became known as a well-organised temple with a management committee. It is now visited not only by Nakarattars, but also by many other non-specific Hindu devotees. As such, the temple also developed into a complex temple enshrining many other deities. Due to the growing demand for authentic priests as a result of the extensive introduction of orthodox deities, annual Sanskritic festivals and life-cycle rituals[33], Brahman priests became an essential aspect of the rituals. Thus, the number of Brahman priests invited from India steadily increased. In this way, the presence of Brahman priests was established and gradually grew larger[34].

What factors fuel this trend, in which the importance of Brahman priests in Singaporean Hinduism is growing prominent? In this context, it might be useful to refer to the religious trend of Chinese citizens forming a massive overseas diaspora, comprising the overwhelming majority of Singapore's population.

In his paper cited earlier, Tong Chee Kiong, a cultural anthropologist in the Department of Sociology at the National University of Singapore（NUS）, spotlighted the growing trend of 'rationalisation of

religion', which gradually is becoming dominant in Singapore's religious landscape. Among the Chinese population here for the past 20 years, a survey indicates that the percentage of Taoists sharply declined, from 29.3% to 8.5%, whereas the percentage of self-identifying Buddhists drastically increased, from 26.7% to 42.5%. Within the same period, the number of Christians in Singapore steadily increased, from 10.3% to 14.6%. The rate of non-believers also is on the rise, from 13.2% to 14.8%. The trend of rationalisation of religion observed among demographically dominant Chinese population in this nation cannot be neglected in interpreting parallel phenomena, if any, in other ethnoreligious groups.

Regarding Hindus, for example, slight growth in this population has been observed, from 3.7% to 4.0% over the same 20 years. According to Vineeta Sinha, another anthropologist at National University of Singapore, increasing interest in the 'documented religion' has been growing among the young generation of Hindus in Singapore. In contrast to a religion that is ambiguous and hard to define, such as the faith centring around the 'inexplicable' power of the divine, there is a growing trend toward a religion that can be defined clearly and is subject to verbal explanation[35].

Indeed, it may be difficult to view Hinduism flatly as a 'clearly defined religion', but within the limits of the Hindu fold, it would be possible to single out the form or aspect that is clearly distinguished from the others. In that respect, the Agamic type of Hindu religion that Brahmans practise has, indeed, organised ritual systems and the 'textual tradition' with the corpse of scripture from old times. On the other hand, Hinduism, as represented by non-Brahman priests, apparently is devoid of the written tradition, and their rituals have no basis in documented materials. It is unavoidable that non-Brahmanical Hinduism has a somewhat prevalent image of vagueness or ambiguity. Brahmans' steadfast penetration and intervention into the non-Brahman sphere and Brahmans' subsequent expulsion of non-Brahmans – visibly observed in Singapore's Hindu temples – can be interpreted as a result of an aforementioned trend of rationalisation of religion, regardless of ethnic groups in this diasporic nation. This growing tendency to rationalise religions acts as the driving force to encourage, implicitly, the transformation and reorganisation of Hinduism in Singapore in many aspects.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank L.N. Subbiah, a former trustee of Sri Thedayuthapani Temple, for his knowledge and guidance. I also want to thank Mr. Candru, former chairman of Sri Mariamman Temple, for his detailed description of his temple and its activities. I deeply want to thank Mr. Nallathambi of the Hindu Endowments Board for providing information and materials on Hinduism and interfaith dialogue in Singapore. I also am thankful to Pushpa Lathadevi Naidu of the National Library Board (NLB), Government of Singapore, for her understanding and kind help with my research activities on Hindu religion in her country.

notes

1 This paper reports the results from a religious anthropological survey intensively conducted in the Republic of Singapore in October-December, 2005, and the subsequent field research occasionally conducted thereafter up to the present on Hindu

temples of ethnic Indians in Singapore and their ritual spaces.

2　https://www.singstat.gov.sg/find-data/search-by-theme/population/population-and-population-structure/latest-data/（accessed July 16, 2018）.

3　The ethnic composition is based on the 2015 general household survey published by the Department of Statistics, Government of Singapore. https://www.singstat.gov.sg/find-data/search-by-theme/population/population-and-population-structure/latest-data/（accessed July 16, 2018）.

4　*Ibid*.

5　Tong Chee Kiong, 'The Rationalisation of Religion in Singapore', In: Bang Kah Choon, Anne Pakir and Tong Chee Kiong（eds.）, *Imaging Singapore*. Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2004, p. 291.

6　On the other hand, Muslims make up most of Malaysia's population.

7　The same case applies to Taoism.

8　http://heb.gov.sg/singaporehindutemples.html/（accessed 12 Feb 2009）. Currently, the list is not available on the website.

9　This is a term by V. Sinha（Sinha, V., *A New God in the Diaspora? Muneeswaran Worship in Contemporary Singapore.* Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2005.

10　As expected, it is the same case with Taoist temples. In the prayer during the Nine Emperor Gods Festival（also known as the Chinese Vegetarian Festival）, celebrated annually on the first nine days in the ninth month of the Chinese calendar, gods usually enshrined in private households are installed on an altar in a temporary tent in a public space（such as an open ground of HDB flats）and explicitly shown in a spontaneously built temple.

11　See Connie Lee 编辑『洛阳大伯公宫：历年所举办的活动与庆典特刊（LYTPK Talk: The Events at Loyang Tua Pek Kong Temple）』新加坡：洛阳大伯公宫, 2005.

12　However, in Malaysia and Indonesia, many temples still have only non-Brahman priests.

13　According to L. N. Subbiah, a trustee of the same temple for fiscal year 2005.

14　*Beyond Divine Doors*. Singapore: Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple, 2005. Overseas travel was once strictly tabooed, particularly among Brahmans, for fear of being tainted in a foreign land.

15　The Sri Vadapathira Kaliamman Temple and the Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple, both located along Serangoon Road, are two more examples.

16　In this paper, 'an organised Hindu temple' is defined as a type of temple that is officially registered, has a managing committee and submits income and expenditure reports to the government.

17　See Sinha., *op.cit.*

18　These temples, coloured in the Brahmanic value system, are also known as 'Agamic temples' in English. They use rituals and *mantras* based on Sanskrit scripture. In mainland India, most large and famous temples belong to this category.

19　The case of Palani is an extreme example. Besides the celebrated Murukan Temple on the hilltop, there is also a Muslim shrine dedicated to 'Sekunder', which Muslim pilgrims associate with Murukan. The Ayyappan Temple in holy Sabarimalai in Kerala is another extreme example, in which the shrine of Vavuruswami（a Muslim saint）is located on the way to the hilltop temple.

20　In some similar cases that I witnessed, the ritual space where Brahman priests temporarily invited from outside is strictly screened off with a curtain from the areas for non-Brahman priests when a special ceremonial ritual is held on a large scale in a rural non-Brahmanical temple.

21　In principle, every 12 years, the Hindu temples are supposed to be repaired and renovated, and the divine icons' powers should be renewed as well. However, this ritual cannot always be performed, depending on the temples' financial circumstances.

22　Regarding these matters, three references published by the present author are used: Yamashita, H., 'Kumbhabhiseka of Aiyanar Temple Complex: an Introduction', *Japanese Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies*, *40*（2）, 1993, pp.1033-1038; Yamashita, H., 'The Forms and Functions of the Aiyanar Temple Complex: A Preliminary Study on the Cult of the Male Godlings in Rural Tamil Nadu', Ikari, Y. and N. Yasuhiko（eds.）, *From Vedic Altar to Village Shrine: Toward an Interface Between Indology and Anthropology*（*Senri Ethnological Studies* 36）, Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 1993, pp. 269-303; Yamashita, H., 'The Cult of Aiyanar: A Note on Rural Godling in Present-day Tamilnadu', Mizushima, T. and H. Yanagisawa（eds.）, *History and Society in South India*（research report for Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research）, Tokyo:

Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1996, pp. 58-76.

23 According to recent information from the Hindu newspaper's website, an Aiyappan temple in the Madurai area, run by the Tamil Nadu government, introduced a non-Brahman priest for the first time in 2018. The priest, T. Marichamy, finished a 'junior priest certificate' course offered by the Karunanidhi-led DMK government for 2007-08 for all castes, and he was one of the 206 people trained (https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/tamil-nadus-first-government-trained-non-brahmin-priest-and-his-god-moment/article24604596.ece/ ; accessed Sept 20,2018). However, it remains unknown whether he works in close cooperation with Brahman priests in the same ritual space in the temple.

24 For the Thendayuthapani Temple and the Nagarattars, a particular caste community possessing and operating this temple, see Yamashita, H., 'The Nagarattar Temples and a Priest Training Institution in Chettinad, South India', *Journal of the Graduate School of International Cultural Studies*, Vol. 25, 2017, pp. 85-95.

25 For the history of the Mariamman Temple, see a not-for-sale HEB publication: *Beyond Divine Doors*, Singapore: Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple, 2005.

26 The temple plan is as shown in Mariamman Temple`s brochure: *Sri Mariamman Temple: A National Monument,* Singapore: Sri Mariamman Temple. No changes have been made so far regarding the positions of the sanctums and gods.

27 Fire-walking is practised in honour of Goddess Draupadi, who is considered to be the incarnation of Mariamman. The references for fire-walking and various related rituals performed in the weeks before and after the ritual are as follows: Yamashita, H. & N. Okamitsu, 'Votive Rites and the *Mahabharata*: Fire-walking and Its Related Ritual Sequence of a Hindu Temple in Singapore', *Toho* (*The East*), No. 27, 2011, pp. 215-245.

28 Those named Sivacharyar, Gurukkal or Adishaivar work as priests in Saiva and Amman (goddess) temples.

29 Later, one more Brahman priest joined the staff, and the total number of staff was 19 thereafter.

30 In this case, the devotee who acts as the patron donates the prescribed amount of money to the temple for the rituals specially performed for his family's well-being.

31 *Puja* is an essential ritual in Hinduism consisting of the offering of light, flowers, water or food to the deity, while *arati* is another important ritual in which light or camphor is waved in circular fashion, clockwise, around the divine.

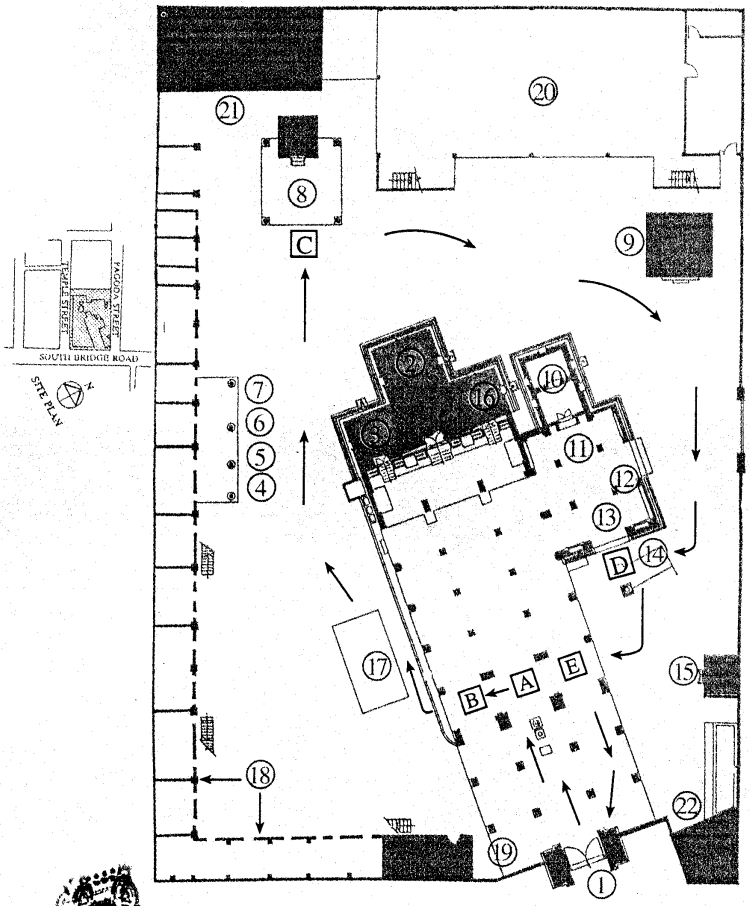
32 *Prasada* is anything, an edible food in many cases, first offered to the deity, then consumed by devotees after worship. *Vibhuti* is the sacred ash of the Hindus obtained by burning a special kind of wood, dried cow dung or rice husks. *Kunkuma* is the pigmented powder made from turmeric or any other local materials used for religious markings on the face.

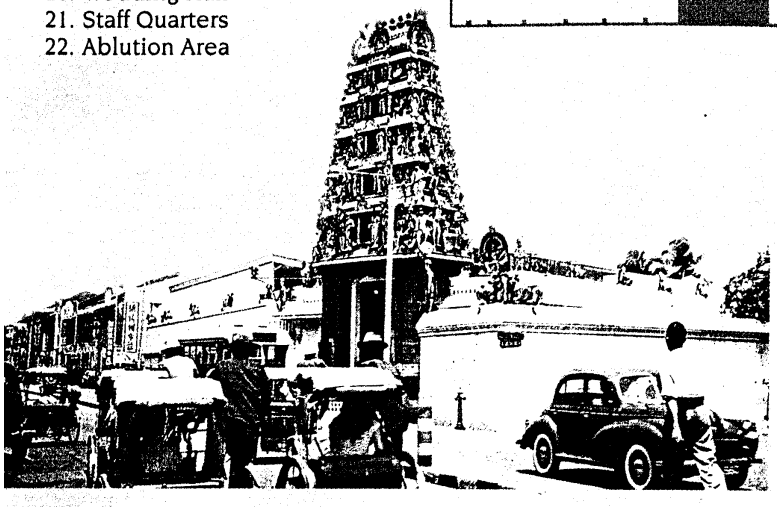
33 For example, due to the gradual penetration of a Hindu belief into immigrant society that a marriage becomes valid only if a Brahman priest completely handles the wedding ceremony, the notion of the importance of Brahman priesthood might be growing.

34 In the case of the Thendayuthapani Temple, during observations in February 2009, the staff structure comprised three Brahman priests, three non-Brahman priests, two musicians, one Tecikar, one cook, one clerk and one security guard.

35 Sinha, V., 'Merging "Different" Sacred Places: Enabling Religious Encounters Through Pragmatic Utilisation of Space?' *Contribution to Indian Sociology*, (n.s.) 37 (3), 2003, pp. 459-494. In this context, refer to Tanaka, M., 'Hinduism in Singapore: Ethno-Nationalisation in Process', Koizumi, J. (ed.), *Dynamics of Cultures and Systems in the Pacific Rim: Anthropological Studies*, Osaka: Osaka University Press, 2003, pp. 15-34.

1. Entrance (rajagopuram)
2. Sri Mariamman
3. Sri Ramar
4. Sri Durgai
5. Sri Mathurai Veeran
6. Sri Periyachi
7. Sri Veerama Kaliamman
8. Sri Vinayagar
9. Sri Aravan
10. Sri Draupadi
11. The Pandavas
12. Sabtha Kannigal
13. Sri Iyenar
14. Flagpole
15. Sri Muthalaraja
16. Sri Muruga
17. Fire-pit
18. Viewing Gallery
19. Office
20. Wedding Hall
21. Staff Quarters
22. Ablution Area





Sri Mariamman Temple in the 1930's.